

## Appearance By Local Militia Raises Questions, Militia Provides Answers

*A group dressed in matching camouflage uniforms in downtown Vernonia raised concerns. Organizers of the local militia group say they are here to help, and citizens have nothing to fear.*

By Scott Laird

The recent appearance of a group of 16 people dressed in camouflage on the downtown streets of Vernonia on June 25 raised concerns for a number of people.

The group was the Southeast Columbia County Militia, a constitutional militia group known as the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, who assures locals they have nothing to worry about.

People who saw or heard about the militia's movement through Vernonia asked about the group's intended purpose. There were concerns about the organization being armed and dressed in military style uniforms, and how the group's appearance might cause people in the community, including minorities and visitors, to feel apprehensive. There were also questions about the group's membership and their qualifications.

According to a spokesperson, the group is training to be a community support group to help local public safety agencies in the event of a large natural disaster or other emergency. "We're training to be of assistance to anyone in this community who needs help," explained the militia member. "We're interested in 'What can we do to help if there is an actual crisis?' That's what we're all about. This is a great group of people that really

has a deep love for this community."

The group, which organized several years ago, currently has around 22 members. They practice militia standards and principals, and utilize standardized codes of conduct, uniforms, and a basic military command structure. The group has no political affiliations and denies any racist ideology. The spokesman declined to name any members of the group, or any affiliation with other militia organizations for this article due to security and privacy purposes.

"It is important to us that this mission in downtown is not misinterpreted," said the spokesman. "We are a constitutional militia, abiding by all state and local laws. Our insistence on each member leading an exemplary lifestyle is paramount. We ask everyone to read the Constitution of the United States and actually understand what the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment says: 'A well regulated militia, necessary to the security of the free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.'"

The local group is completely self funded, with members purchasing their own uniforms and providing their own supplies. They meet regularly in scheduled training sessions to "... get more efficient and better at what we're doing so we can respond in a professional manner," said the spokesman.

Each member of the group has been vetted through the background check that is part of the application process for a concealed carry handgun permit, something all members are required to obtain. "If they don't have it yet, they are in the process," said the spokesman. "And, if they are denied a concealed car-

## Lights for Liberty to Hold Vigil in St. Helens

The Columbia County community is invited to gather for a candlelight vigil at Columbia View Park in St. Helens (across from City Hall) on Friday, July 12 from 8:00 - 9:30 pm to call for an end of the immigration detention camps at the United States/Mexico border, and protest the inhumane conditions faced by asylum seekers and refugees. Please bring a candle, your concern, and your compassion.

This event is being hosted locally as part of a nationwide event organized in conjunction with Lights for Liberty, a coalition of people dedicated to human rights and the fundamental principle behind democracy, that all human beings have a right to life, liberty and dignity. Similar events are planned in Oregon in Portland, Salem, Ashland, Coos Bay, Eugene, McMinnville, and Yachats.

For more information contact Lori Baker at (971) 203-6173 or [Lori.Baker@q.com](mailto:Lori.Baker@q.com), or go to: [www.lightsforliberty.org](http://www.lightsforliberty.org).



ry permit, then they are denied membership to the militia. It's that simple."

The group carries and trains with weapons for a reason - to control civil unrest if it were to happen, and to defend themselves and the community. "The weaponry is way down the ladder of importance as far as militia groups are concerned," the spokesman says. "Are they necessary? Yes, they are. Not only for our own personal protection, but for the protection of the people we're trying to serve. The police department is here to serve and protect the residents of this community, and so is the militia."

The group's membership is made up of members of the local community including women, a decorated

search and rescue participant, several military veterans, a registered nurse, three HAM radio operators, a former private investigator, and several local business owners.

The group has visited the Vernonia downtown on several previous occasions and has always alerted the Vernonia Police Department prior to a public "mission." They did not carry rifles while in the downtown, and members wore vests with a large patch on the back which identified them as a member of the "Columbia County Militia." They have been working their way through the downtown, assessing local businesses, with permission from

*continued on page 3*

## Digging Deeper into Oregon's Cap-and-Trade Proposal

*Part 1: HB 2020 caused a lot of concern, confusion, and anger among Oregon's citizenry. Here are some things about the bill you might not have been aware of.*

By Scott Laird

Oregon's proposal to implement a cap-and-trade policy in an effort to reduce the state's carbon emissions, and attempt to slow global climate change, House Bill 2020, died an ugly death on June 24, as Democratic Senate President Peter Courtney announced the plan did not have the needed votes to pass.

The announcement that the bill was dead brought cheers from rural activists who had organized under the name "Timber Unity" to protest the bill. The bill had been passed by Oregon's House, with truck drivers flooding Sa-

lem in anticipation of a Senate vote, while Senate Republicans left Salem, and refused to return, to avoid being forced to vote on legislation they opposed.

The proposal to limit carbon emissions had been brought forward by Oregon Democrats, and was a key piece of their ambitious platform this legislative session. The proposed bill divided the state, and further widened the urban/rural divide currently plaguing the state.

The strength and unity shown by the rural organizers was impressive and Republican leaders responded with their walkout. But those demonstrations can't hide several key issues. Industry lobbyists for timber, natural gas, and petroleum played a significant role in controlling the narrative around Oregon's cap-and-trade proposal. The rural/urban divide was used to further split Oregon's citizenry. Legislators in Oregon contributed to the drama when

they staged their walkout. The complexity and density of the bill and the subject matter, along with the ambiguity of its real world impacts, made it hard to have meaningful and positive dialog on the issues surrounding the implementation of cap-and-trade, leading to a lot of conjecture and misinformation.

Oregon's failure to pass HB 2020 raises several serious questions: What role does industry money play in controlling Oregon political policy making? Is cap-and-trade a viable option in Oregon's economy? Is Oregon still a leader in creating and implementing progressive political policy? What are we going to do about global climate change?

While the Oregon cap-and-trade proposal raised many unanswered questions about how it would impact the state's economy, particularly those living in rural Oregon, Oregon Republicans

*continued on page 7*

*inside*

6 reduced chinook limits

7 where do you read the voice?

11 how fares our watershed

